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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to review the methods currently used to report pupil progress and to evaluate report cards used experimentally in Vancouver schools during the 1971-72 school year. Five report cards were developed for primary grades and five more were developed for intermediate grades. Secondary schools were permitted to use any of five report forms. Questionnaires were distributed to 320 parents of the pupils. The principal findings were: (1) Of all methods of reporting, parents prefer a combination of report cards and teacher-parent conferences. By themselves, cards are more popular than teacher-parent conferences; (2) The questions that parents would like most to be answered are: How is my child progressing in his studies? Is he working hard enough? and Is he happy in school? They are least interested in his behavior and social competence; (3) Parents were generally satisfied with the present report cards; (4) Most parents would prefer that the child's achievement be evaluated in relation to his own ability; their second choice was a comparison with a prescribed standard of achievement; (5) Parents would not be satisfied to receive report cards only when their children are doing unsatisfactory work; (6) Of all the systems used to report pupil progress, parents of children in elementary schools prefer, in order, symbols, letter grades, and teachers' comments; parents of secondary students prefer letter grades, percentage marks, and teachers' comments; and (7) Parents of secondary students want to be informed about absences from school and from subject classes. (Author/DB)

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RESEARCH REPORT

# An Evaluation of Current Methods to Report Pupil Progress

June 8, 1972

Katherine J. Gilbert
and
E. N. Ellis

Research Report 72-08

Department of Planning and Evaluation
Board of School Trustees
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# AN EVALUATION OF CURRENT METHODS TO REPORT PUPIL PROGRESS

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to review the methods currently used to report pupil progress and to evaluate report cards used experimentally in Vancouver schools during the 1971-72 school year.

A committee of principals of elementary schools developed five report cards (No. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) for primary grades and five more (V, W, X, Y, and Z) for intermediate grades to be used experimentally during the 1971-72 school year. Principals and staff selected the cards that suited the needs of their schools. Secondary schools were permitted to use any approved report form (A, B, C, and two others) for the 1971-72 school year.

Questionnaires were distributed to:

- sixty parents of pupils in Year Three in each of five schools using reports of styles 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5;
- sixty parents of pupils in Year Six in each of another five schools using reports of styles V, W, X, Y, and Z;
- one hundred parents of students in junior secondary grades in each of three schools using reports A, B, and C.
- one hundred parents of students in senior secondary grades in each of the same three schools.

The principal findings were:

1. Of all methods of reporting, parents prefer a combination of report cards and teacher-parent conferences. By themselves, cards are more popular than teacher-parent conferences.

2. The questions that parents would like most to be answered are:

   How is my child progressing in his studies?
   Is he working hard enough? and
   Is he happy in school?

   They are least interested in his behaviour and social competence.

3. Parents were generally satisfied with the present report cards; satisfaction ranged from 65% to 82%, except for the secondary school report card "B" for which the proportion was only 53%.

4. Most parents would prefer that the child's achievement be evaluated in relation to his own ability. Their second choice was a comparison with a prescribed standard of achievement.

5. Parents would not be satisfied to receive report cards only when their children are doing unsatisfactory work.

6. Of all of the systems used to report pupil progress, parents of children in elementary schools prefer (in order) symbols, letter grades and teachers' comments. Parents of secondary students prefer letter grades, percentage marks, and teachers' comments (in that order).

7. Parents of secondary students want to be informed about absences from school and from subject classes.

Parents in different school districts appear to have different desires. Accordingly, the present policy is a wise one of permitting each school to use a style of reporting and a design of report card that suit its particular needs.

# AN EVALUATION OF CURRENT METHODS TO REPORT PUPIL PROGRESS

In May, 1971, the Head of the Education Department asked that the Department of Planning and Evaluation make a study of methods used to report pupil progress as well as an evaluation of the report cards in current use in the elementary and secondary schools of Vancouver.

At the time of the request a committee of elementary principals was completing a review of reporting procedures in which some fundamental conflicts in philosophy were resolved and some apparent inconsistencies in marking were removed. The committee drafted five styles of report cards for use in the primary division and five for use in the intermediate division. When these had been approved by the Board, samples were distributed to elementary schools. Principals and staffs selected the cards that they considered most suitable for their schools and these have been used on an experimental basis throughout the 1971-72 school year.

The principal features of the five styles of primary report cards are listed below:

"1" - This is an anecdotal-type of report card designed for use in conjunction with teacher-parent conferences. Number of schools using this type of report card - 25 schools.

"2" - This card makes possible a comprehensive report, by check-off, on progress in the basic skills of reading, arithmetic and language and the design is specific for schools using the level system. Space is also provided for teachers' comments. Number of schools using this type of report card - 11 schools.

"3" - This card provides for the reporting by check-off of progress in basic skills in language arts and arithmetic and for general progress in other subjects. Considerable attention is directed to the development of social responsibilities, work habits and safety habits. There is space for teachers' comments. The card is designed for use in conjunction with teacher-parent conferences. Number of schools using this type of report card - 30 schools.

"4" - This is an anecdotal-type card designed for use in schools using the level system in language arts and arithmetic. There is no provision for the check-off of items. However, space is provided for comments about other subjects, behaviour, general attitude and relationships with other children. Number of schools using this type of report card - 3 schools.

"5" - This card provides for the check-off of items in language arts, arithmetic, social studies, science, physical education, music, art, social habits, work habits and safety habits. The format is compact and space for teachers' comments is limited. Number of schools using this type of report card - 14 schools.

The principal features of the five styles of intermediate grade report cards are listed below:

"V" - This is an anecdotal report identical with "1". Number of schools using this type of report card - 9 schools.

"W" - This is also an anecdotal-type report card, similar to "V", but different in that it includes major subject headings. The space is limited for comments on the third reporting. Number of schools using this type of report card - 9 schools.

"X" - This is an eight-page report with a check-off scheme for rating achievement in various items of language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, physical education, art, music, behaviour, attitude and relationships with other pupils. Space is provided for the teachers' comments. The report card may be used in conjunction with teacher-parent conferences. Number of schools using this type of report card - 27 schools.

"Y" - This is a six-page folder that provides for the check-off of items in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, social habits, work habits and safety habits. Adequate space is provided for teachers' comments. The report card may be used in conjunction with teacher-parent conferences. Number of schools using this type of report card - 30 schools.

"Z" - This is the report card that has been used for a number of years in Vancouver schools. It enables the teacher to report the pupils' progress in school subjects and in general development. Space is provided for teachers' comments. Number of schools using this type of report card - 11 schools.

Questionnaires were distributed to:

- sixty parents of pupils in Year Three in each of five elementary schools using reports of styles 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and to
- sixty parents of pupils in Year Six in each of five elementary schools using reports of styles V, W, X, Y and Z.

Principals of secondary schools submitted copies of report cards in current use. There tended to be five different styles:

1. The first style ('A') is the regular report card designed by the Provincial Department of Education. It is being used in five secondary schools. One of these uses a separate physical education report card. Another school uses a special insert to report achievement in physical education, two insert sheets for general mathematics and a new card for typing. At a third school, interim anecdotal reports supplement the regular issue of departmental cards. This school has designed an insert on which is reported progress in science assignments.

2. The second style ('B') of report card used in seven secondary schools is a computer-generated report that provides for a listing of courses and a print-out of letter grades, work habits, symbols, and teachers' comments. The report card is designed to meet the needs of the semester system. Carbon copies are provided.

3. The third is the anecdotal-style ('C') of report booklet used at one secondary school, which provides for the reporting by subject teachers on the student's achievement in the courses he is taking. On the inner page of the booklet the counsellor reports on citizenship, number of subjects, roll call absences and makes other comments.

Questionnaires were distributed to:

- one hundred parents of students in the junior secondary grades in each of three schools using reports A, B and C, and to
- one hundred parents of students in the senior secondary grades in each of the same three schools.

4. The fourth style serves equally well the semester scheme or the traditional school year plan. It enables the teacher to report achievement, work habits, citizenship, attendance and anecdotal comments on a self-carbon pad from which copies are provided for parents, counsellor and principal. This style of report card is used at four secondary schools. (Unfortunately, this report does not include parental reaction to this style of card.)

5. The fifth style was designed by the graphic arts department of a large secondary school where it is being used experimentally this year. The card combines many of the better features of other cards, including the reporting of achievement, work habits, citizenship, and subject periods missed for each course the student is taking. Provision is made for the monthly reporting of attendance and punctuality and for the requesting of parent-teacher interviews. There is a generous amount of space for comment by teachers and administrators.

Copies of report cards in current use are available for examination at the Department of Planning and Evaluation.

## Response to the Questionnaires

The questionnaires were distributed to parents in the thirteen schools with a request that they return them unsigned to the school office. The responses to the questionnaires have been summarized in the next two sections of this report.

## Summary of Responses to Questionnaires by Parents of Pupils in Ten Elementary Schools

In each school 60 copies of the letter were distributed. The returns are summarized below:

| | School | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | V | W | X | Y | Z | Total |
| Number Distributed | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 600 |
| Number Returned | 49 | 52 | 37 | 42 | 39 | 37 | 24 | 47 | 40 | 26 | 393 |
| Percentage Returned | 82% | 87% | 62% | 70% | 65% | 62% | 40% | 78% | 67% | 43% | 65.5% |

Percentage returns ranged from 40% to 87% and averaged 65.5%, which is gratifying in view of the fact no follow-up was made to elicit a return from parents who did not respond to the first invitation. The school with the lowest return was substituted at short notice for one in the original sample.

Item 1: Which method of reporting do you like best?

The responses to this question, summarized in Table I below, indicate that a majority of parents prefer a combination of report cards and teacher-parent conferences. Another 23% prefer report cards alone and another 5% select teacher-parent conferences. It may be noteworthy that in only one school are teacher-parent conferences more popular than report cards alone. In the other nine schools the ratio of preferences for report cards to teacher-parent conferences is 7 to 1.

TABLE I: RESPONSES TO ITEM I: "WHICH METHOD OF REPORTING DO YOU LIKE BEST?"

| Response | School | | | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | V | W | X | Y | Z | | |
| "Report Cards" | 6 | 19 | 10 | 8 | 13 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 91 | 23% |
| "Teacher-Parent Conferences" | 9 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 21 | 5% |
| "A combination of these" | 31 | 30 | 22 | 31 | 21 | 27 | 18 | 36 | 30 | 14 | 260 | 66% |
| "Conferences, only when requested" | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 2% |
| "Report Cards and Conferences only when requested" | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 2% |
| "Other ways of reporting" | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1% |
| No response | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1% |
| Total Number of Respondents | 49 | 52 | 37 | 42 | 39 | 37 | 24 | 47 | 40 | 26 | 393 | 100% |

Item 2: Rank in order of interest the questions that you would like to have answered about your child's progress in school.

a) How is my child progressing in his studies?
b) Is he working hard enough?
c) Is he well-behaved?
d) Does he get along well with his fellow pupils?
e) Is my child happy in school?

Parents assigned numerical ranks and from these, weighted-mean priorities were calculated and they are listed in Table II below. These weighted-mean priorities were then assigned numerical ranks for each group and for the total group (see Table III).

TABLE II: WEIGHTED-MEAN PRIORITIES FOR FIVE QUESTIONS (ITEM 2)

| Response | School | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | V | W | X | Y | Z | |
| How is my child progressing in his studies? | 1.94 | 1.55 | 1.74 | 1.55 | 1.79 | 1.57 | 1.96 | 1.37 | 1.72 | 1.50 | 1.67 |
| Is he working hard enough? | 3.29 | 3.14 | 2.91 | 2.51 | 2.48 | 2.75 | 3.18 | 2.93 | 2.63 | 2.26 | 2.80 |
| Is he well-behaved? | 4.19 | 3.40 | 3.76 | 3.74 | 3.32 | 3.43 | 2.95 | 3.53 | 3.58 | 3.64 | 3.55 |
| Does he get along well with his fellow pupils? | 3.29 | 3.42 | 3.50 | 3.61 | 3.58 | 3.94 | 3.57 | 3.72 | 4.04 | 3.68 | 3.64 |
| Is my child happy in school? | 1.86 | 2.58 | 2.53 | 2.95 | 2.90 | 3.26 | 3.00 | 3.04 | 3.11 | 2.87 | 2.81 |

TABLE III: PRIORITIES FOR FIVE QUESTIONS (ITEM 2)

| Response | School | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | V | W | X | Y | Z | |
| How is my child progressing in his studies? | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Is he working hard enough? | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Is he well-behaved? | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Does he get along well with his fellow pupils? | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Is my child happy in school? | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

Parents were generally most concerned about the child's progress in his studies. They were concerned also about the effort he was putting forth and his happiness in school. Generally, they were least concerned about his ability to socialize and to behave well. While the patterns of ranking have remarkable similarities there was one school where the pattern was strikingly different. Parents of pupils in this school were most concerned about their child's happiness and progress in school and lease concerned about behaviour.

Item 3: Are you satisfied with the report card in use at your child's school?

75% of the parents are satisfied with the present report cards. 22% of the parents expressed dissatisfaction. The most satisfying report cards appear to be "Y", "2" and "4". The least satisfying are "3", "Z" and "X".

The following comments were commonly made:

"The report card does not provide enough information."
"The information is too vague."
"The reporting scheme does not provide any basis for comparison."

The responses to Item 3 are summarized in Table IV below:

TABLE IV: RESPONSES TO ITEM 3: "ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE REPORT CARD NOW IN USE AT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL?"

| Response | School | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | V | W | X | Y | Z | |
| "Yes" | 36 | 42 | 24 | 34 | 31 | 29 | 17 | 31 | 33 | 17 | 294 (74.8%) |
| "No" | 9 | 10 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 16 | 4 | 9 | 87 (22.1%) |
| No comment | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 12 ( 3.1%) |
| % satisfied | 73% | 81% | 65% | 81% | 79% | 78% | 71% | 66% | 82% | 65% | |

Item 4: Which one of the following ways would you prefer to be used in evaluating your child's progress?

a) in relation to his own ability?
b) a comparison with progress of other children?
c) a comparison with a prescribed standard of achievement?

The majority prefer to have their child's progress evaluated in terms of his own ability. While 12% of the parents would have progress evaluated by comparing it with that of other children, there are twice as many parents who would prefer the comparison to be with a prescribed standard of achievement. The responses to item 4 are summarized in Table V on the next page.

TABLE V: RESPONSES TO ITEM 4: "WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS WOULD YOU PREFER TO BE USED IN EVALUATING YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS?"

| Response | School | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | V | W | X | Y | Z | |
| Achievement in relation to his own ability | 32<br>65% | 27<br>52% | 21<br>57% | 27<br>64% | 24<br>62% | 20<br>54% | 12<br>50% | 23<br>49% | 22<br>55% | 11<br>42% | 219 (55.7%) |
| Comparison with the progress of other children | 3<br>6% | 5<br>10% | 7<br>19% | 3<br>7% | 4<br>10% | 7<br>19% | 2<br>8% | 5<br>11% | 6<br>15% | 6<br>23% | 48 (12.2%) |
| Comparison with a prescribed standard of achievement | 8<br>16% | 14<br>27% | 7<br>19% | 9<br>21% | 10<br>26% | 9<br>24% | 9<br>38% | 14<br>30% | 9<br>22% | 7<br>27% | 96 (24.4%) |
| Combination - 1 & 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 ( 1%) |
| Combination - 1 & 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 8 ( 2%) |
| Combination - all three | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 7 ( 1.8%) |
| No response | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 11 ( 2.8%) |

Item 5: Would you be satisfied to receive a report card only when your child is doing unsatisfactory work?

A large majority of the respondents would not be satisfied to receive a report only when the child is doing unsatisfactory work. This pattern prevailed in all schools and in one school ("X") the percentage was 100%.

The returns to Item 5 are summarized in Table VI below:

TABLE VI: RESPONSES TO ITEM 5: "WOULD YOU BE SATISFIED TO RECEIVE A REPORT CARD ONLY WHEN YOUR CHILD IS DOING UNSATISFACTORY WORK?"

| Response | School | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | V | W | X | Y | Z | |
| "Yes" | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 24 ( 6.1%) |
| "No" | 44 | 45 | 33 | 41 | 34 | 35 | 22 | 47 | 37 | 25 | 363 (92.4%) |
| "Yes" and "No" | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 ( 0.3%) |
| No response | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 ( 1.3%) |
| % not satisfied | 90% | 86% | 89% | 98% | 87% | 94% | 92% | 100% | 92% | 96% | |

Item 6: How many times during the year would you like to have a report on your child's progress in school?

The responses to item 6 are summarized in Table VII. A majority of the parents favour having three reports per year and more than 86% would be satisfied with three or four reports per year. Other responses ranged from "none" to "monthly". Five persons stated that they would like a report "as often as possible".

TABLE VII: RESPONSES TO ITEM 6: "HOW MANY TIMES DURING THE YEAR WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A REPORT ON YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS IN SCHOOL?"

| Number of Times | School | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | V | W | X | Y | Z | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 ( .3%) |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 ( .3%) |
| 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 14 ( 3.6%) |
| 2-3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 ( .8%) |
| 3 | 21 | 28 | 20 | 25 | 16 | 22 | 15 | 28 | 24 | 15 | 214 (54.5%) |
| 3-4 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 23 ( 5.9%) |
| 4 | 12 | 15 | 13 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 4 | 14 | 9 | 9 | 103 (26.2%) |
| 4-5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 ( .3%) |
| 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 ( 2.0%) |
| 3-5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 ( .3%) |
| 6 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 ( .3%) |
| Monthly | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 ( .8%) |
| As often as possible | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 ( 1.3%) |
| No response | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 15 ( 3.8%) |

Item 7: Which reporting system for indicating progress do you prefer?

The responses to this question are summarized in Table VIII below.

"Symbols", "letter grades", and "teachers' comments" were preferred (in that order). Parents apparently would not accept a system that reported the work to be merely "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory". Nor would they be satisfied with a system that employed merely the general comments of teachers. Percentage marks are preferred by a small group of parents (8.9%). The pattern of preferences varied from School "2" and School "Y" which had a strong preference for "symbols" and "letter grades" to School "1" where a majority of parents preferred to have "teachers' comments".

Commonly the parents indicated a preference for a combination of "symbols and teachers' comments" or "letter grades and teachers' comments".

TABLE VIII: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO ITEM 7: "WHICH REPORTING SYSTEM DO YOU PREFER FOR INDICATING PROGRESS?"

| Response | School | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | V | W | X | Y | Z | |
| Symbols | 6 | 29 | 12 | 8 | 19 | 7 | 2 | 18 | 21 | 4 | 126 (32.1%) |
| Letter Grades | 1 | 16 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 12 | 5 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 85 (21.6%) |
| Percentage marks | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 35 ( 8.9%) |
| "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 ( 0.8%) |
| Teachers' comments by subject | 21 | 3 | 6 | 11 | 3 | 13 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 74 (18.8%) |
| Teachers' comments in general | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 ( 1.3%) |
| Combination of some of the above | 10 | 1 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 46 (11.7%) |
| Other scheme | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 11 ( 2.8%) |
| No response | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 ( 2.0%) |

Item 8: Have you any suggestions to make regarding the methods presently used to report your child's progress in school?

The most frequent response was not a suggestion at all, but, rather, an indication that parents were satisfied with the methods being used (32 parents responded in this manner).

The suggestion made most often was that reports be made more frequently and be more specific. This was mentioned by 10 parents. Several others (6) requested that they be notified immediately when a problem developed with their children rather than the school waiting until report time to notify them. Dissatisfaction with the parent-teacher conferences was noted by six parents. They suggested several improvements:

- allow more time,
- schedule conferences only when there is something to discuss,
- students should attend the conferences,
- should have at least two conferences per year, and
- the conferences should be less formal.

Also mentioned was the parents' desire to be informed of the criteria by which their children were being evaluated.

Summary of Responses to Questionnaires by Parents of Students in Three Secondary Schools

In each school, 200 questionnaires were distributed. The returns are summarized in Table IX.

TABLE IX: RETURN OF QUESTIONNAIRES BY PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS

| | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. distributed | 200 | 200 | 200 | 600 |
| No. returned | 121 | 60 | 139 | 320 |
| Percentage | 60.5% | 30% | 69.5% | 53.3% |

The overall return of 53% was gratifying in view of the fact that there was no effort made to elicit a return from parents who did not respond to the first invitation.

The poorest return was from parents of school 'B' where the delivery and return of questionnaires was entirely by mail. In the other schools, students took the questionnaire with the Easter report to their parents and returned them to the school. This would seem to be the better way to handle questionnaires of this kind.

Item 1: Which method of reporting do you like best?

A large majority (86.6%) of the parents of secondary students prefer report cards, either alone or in combination with parent-teacher conferences. One parent in twenty chooses "parent-teacher conferences" alone, while another 2.8% would like these conferences only when they are requested by the parent or teacher.

The summary of the responses to Item 1 appears in Table X.

TABLE X: RESPONSES OF PARENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO ITEM 1: "WHICH METHOD OF REPORTING DO YOU LIKE BEST?"

| Response | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total | %age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Report Cards" | 61 | 18 | 57 | 136 | 42.5% |
| "Parent-Teacher Conferences" | 9 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 5.0% |
| "A combination of these" | 41 | 32 | 68 | 141 | 44.1% |
| "Conferences, only when requested" | 5 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 2.8% |
| "Report Cards and Conferences only when requested" | 1 | 5 | 6 | 12 | 3.7% |
| "Other ways" | 4 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 1.9% |
| Total | 121 | 60 | 139 | 320 | |

Item 2: Rank in order of interest the questions that you would like to have answered about your child's progress in school.

a) How is my child progressing in his studies?
b) Is he working hard enough?
c) Is he well-behaved?
d) Does he get along well with his fellow pupils?
e) Is my child happy in school?

Parents assigned numerical ranks and from these weighted-means were calculated (see Table XI). These weighted-mean priorities were then assigned numerical ranks for each group and for the total group (see Table XII). Parents generally assigned greater importance to academic progress and effort than to his social competence and deportment.

TABLE XI: WEIGHTED-MEAN PRIORITIES ASSIGNED BY PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS FOR FIVE QUESTIONS (ITEM 2)

| Question | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| How is my child progressing in his studies? | 1.47 | 1.44 | 1.65 | 1.55 |
| Is he working hard enough? | 2.47 | 2.68 | 2.72 | 2.62 |
| Is he well-behaved? | 3.46 | 3.80 | 3.60 | 3.58 |
| Does he get along well with his fellow pupils? | 3.95 | 3.71 | 3.70 | 3.79 |
| Is my child happy in school? | 3.44 | 3.34 | 3.24 | 3.33 |

TABLE XII: PRIORITIES ASSIGNED BY PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS FOR FIVE QUESTIONS (ITEM 2)

| Question | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| How is my child progressing in his studies? | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Is he working hard enough? | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Is he well-behaved? | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Does he get along well with his fellow pupils? | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Is my child happy in school? | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

It is noteworthy that three respondents at school 'C', two at school 'B', and one at school 'A', said that they would like to know what kind of relationship existed between teacher and pupil. Three more at school 'C' asked for a comparison of the student's performance with standard measures. Four others asked for information about the student's attendance and punctuality. Individual respondents indicated many other questions that they would like to have answered.

Item 3: Are you satisfied with the report card in use at your child's school?

Parents of students at Schools 'A' and 'C' are generally satisfied with the report cards in current use. Only 53% of the parents at School 'B' are satisfied with the report card in use there.

Some of the most frequent comments were:-

School 'A': "I would prefer a percentage system." (7)
"The present system doesn't reflect the student's effort." (5)
"The comments are too vague." (3)
"We would like to know how grades are determined and what they mean." (2)

School 'B': "Too impersonal." (8)
"Not enough detail in the comments--too vague." (7)
"More comments from teachers are necessary." (6)
"The report is complicated; hard to understand." (4)
"Conferences should be a regular part of reporting." (2)

School 'C': "Reporting should be standardized--grades and comments should be the same for all subjects." (6)
"There is too little information; the general comments mean nothing." (5)
"We prefer a percentage marking system." (3)

TABLE XIII: RESPONSES OF PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS TO ITEM 3: "ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE REPORT CARD NOW IN USE AT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL?"

| Response | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Yes" | 95 | 31 | 112 | 238 |
| "No" | 24 | 27 | 26 | 77 |
| No Response | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| % Satisfied | 79.8% | 53.4% | 81.2% | 75.6% |

Item 4: Which one of the following ways would you prefer to be used in evaluating your child's progress?

a) in relation to his own ability?
b) a comparison with progress of other children?
c) a comparison with a prescribed standard of achievement?

A majority of parents would prefer to have each student's progress evaluated in terms of his ability. The scheme second in popularity was "a comparison with a prescribed standard of achievement (See Table XIII)

Parents of students in the three schools tend to agree in their preferences although twice as many parents in school 'C' than in the other schools would like a comparison made with the progress of other children in the grade or class.

TABLE XIII: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS TO ITEM 4: "WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS WOULD YOU PREFER TO BE USED IN EVALUATING YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS?"

| Question | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. His achievement in relation to his ability | 76<br>62.8% | 33<br>55.0% | 68<br>48.9% | 177<br>55.3% |
| 2. A comparison with the progress of other children | 8<br>6.6% | 4<br>6.7% | 20<br>14.4% | 32<br>10.0% |
| 3. A comparison with a prescribed standard | 35<br>28.9% | 21<br>35.0% | 49<br>35.3% | 105<br>32.8% |
| Combination of 1 and 2 | 1<br>0.8% | - | - | 1<br>0.3% |
| Combination of 1 and 3 | - | 1<br>1.7% | - | 1<br>0.3% |
| Combination of 2 and 3 | - | - | 1<br>0.7% | 1<br>0.3% |
| Combination of all three | - | - | 1<br>0.7% | 1<br>0.3% |
| No response | 1<br>0.8% | 1<br>1.7% | - | 2<br>0.6% |

Item 5: Would you be satisfied to receive a report card only when your child is doing unsatisfactory work?

An overwhelming majority of parents indicated that they would not be satisfied to receive a report card only when the student was doing unsatisfactory work. (See Table XIV.)

TABLE XIV: RESPONSES OF PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS TO ITEM 5: "WOULD YOU BE SATISFIED TO RECEIVE A REPORT CARD ONLY WHEN YOUR CHILD IS DOING UNSATISFACTORY WORK?"

| Response | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Yes" | 9 ( 7.4%) | 3 ( 5%) | 5 ( 3.6%) | 17 ( 5.3%) |
| "No" | 112 (92.6%) | 57 (95%) | 133 (95.7%) | 302 (94.4%) |
| "Yes" and "No" | - | - | 1 ( 0.7%) | 1 ( 0.3%) |

Item 6: How many times during the year would you like to have a report on your child's progress in school?

Most parents of secondary students would like to have four reports per year (see Table XV).

TABLE XV: RESPONSES OF PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS TO ITEM 6: "HOW MANY TIMES DURING THE YEAR WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A REPORT ON YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS IN SCHOOL?"

| No. of Times | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 ( 1.7%) | 0 | | 2 ( 0.6%) |
| 2 (each term) | 7 ( 5.8%) | 5 ( 8.3%) | 10 ( 7.2%) | 22 ( 6.9%) |
| 2 or 3 | 0 | 1 ( 1.7%) | 2 ( 1.4%) | 3 ( 0.9%) |
| 3 | 26 (21.5%) | 13 (21.7%) | 9 ( 6.5%) | 48 (15.0%) |
| 3 or 4 | 2 ( 1.7%) | 4 ( 6.7%) | 7 ( 5.0%) | 13 ( 4.1%) |
| 4 | 68 (56.2%) | 31 (51.7%) | 94 (67.6%) | 193 (60.3%) |
| 5 | 9 ( 7.4%) | 2 ( 3.3%) | 2 ( 1.4%) | 13 ( 4.1%) |
| 6 | 4 ( 3.3%) | 3 ( 5.0%) | 9 ( 6.5%) | 16 ( 5.0%) |
| 10 or monthly | 1 ( 0.8%) | 0 | 2 ( 1.4%) | 3 ( 0.9%) |
| "As often as possible" | 1 ( 0.8%) | 0 | 2 ( 1.4%) | 3 ( 0.9%) |
| "When there is trouble" | 0 | 1 ( 1.7%) | 0 | 1 ( 0.3%) |
| No Response | 1 ( 0.8%) | 0 | 2 ( 1.4%) | 3 ( 0.9%) |

Item 7: Which reporting system do you prefer for indicating progress?

Parents of secondary students expressed a preference for letter grades and percentage marks and they rejected the "satisfactory-unsatisfactory" classification. Some parents (10.6%) preferred teachers' comments by subject and as many more would have these comments supplement symbols, letter grades, or percentage marks.

The data of Table XVI suggest that the present reporting practices coincide with the preferences of parents.

TABLE XVI: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS TO ITEM 7: "WHICH REPORTING SYSTEM DO YOU PREFER FOR INDICATING PROGRESS?"

| Reporting System | School 'A' | | School 'B' | | School 'C' | | Total Group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Symbols | 15 | 12.4% | 8 | 13.3% | 8 | 5.8% | 31 | 9.7% |
| Letter Grades | 53 | 43.8% | 18 | 30.0% | 42 | 30.2% | 113 | 35.3% |
| Percentage Marks | 30 | 24.8% | 11 | 18.3% | 35 | 25.2% | 76 | 23.8% |
| "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" | 3 | 2.5% | 0 | | 0 | | 3 | 0.9% |
| Teachers' Comments by Subject | 10 | 8.3% | 12 | 20.0% | 12 | 8.6% | 34 | 10.6% |
| Symbols and Comments | - | | 2 | 3.3% | 5 | 3.6% | 7 | 2.2% |
| Letter Grades and Comments | 3 | 2.5% | 3 | 5.0% | 14 | 10.1% | 20 | 6.3% |
| Percentage Marks and Comments | 1 | 0.8% | 2 | 3.3% | 4 | 2.9% | 7 | 2.2% |
| Symbols and Letter Grades | 1 | 0.8% | - | - | 1 | 0.7% | 2 | 0.6% |
| Letter Grades and Percentage Marks | - | | 2 | 3.3% | - | - | 2 | 0.6% |
| Symbols, Letter Grades and Percentages | 1 | 0.8% | - | - | 1 | 0.7% | 2 | 0.6% |
| Other Schemes[1] | 3 | 2.5% | 1 | 1.7% | 17 | 12.2% | 21 | 6.6% |
| No Response | 1 | 0.8% | 1 | 1.7% | - | - | 2 | 0.6% |

[1]Other Schemes included "ratings and comments", "pass-fail", "letter grades and University point system", "letter grade in relation to ability and another letter grade in relation to class", "Percentage and frequency distribution of the class", and "system doesn't matter".

Item 8: Have you any suggestions to make regarding the methods presently used to report your child's progress in school?

Comments from Parents of Students at School 'A'

| | |
|---|---|
| Present system is satisfactory | (5) |
| Need more communication between parents and teachers | (3) |
| Don't use exams as the basis of evaluation; report progress made on a continuing scale | (3) |
| Need more discipline. Students lack respect for teachers and parents | (2) |
| Evaluation should be left to the student | (1) |
| Teachers' reasons for grades should be given | (1) |
| Parents should be called if interim marks are unsatisfactory | (1) |

Comments from Parents of Students at School 'B'

| | |
|---|---|
| The present system is satisfactory | (6) |
| More parent-teacher conferences are needed | (5) |
| Explain how grades or symbols are determined | (2) |
| Make more room on the report card for teacher comments | (2) |
| Revise the evaluation technique for average students--offer suggestions for improvement | (2) |
| Make the report card easy to read, allow comments from each subject teacher and attach a code for subject abbreviations | (2) |
| More detail in the written report is necessary | (1) |

Comments from Parents of Students at School 'C'

| | |
|---|---|
| Satisfied with the present method | (10) |
| General comments do not provide enough information | ( 9) |
| Parents should be notified immediately of a problem or absence; shouldn't wait until a report time | ( 5) |
| There should be more communication between parents and teachers, more conferences, etc. | ( 5) |
| More frequent reports--one earlier in the year | ( 2) |
| Should use percentages instead of letter grades | ( 2) |
| Reporting systems should be the same throughout the school | ( 2) |
| There should be a mid-semester report for all students | ( 1) |
| Prefer two grades: achievement with respect to ability and in terms of a prescribed standard | ( 1) |

Item 9: Do you wish to be told the number of days that your child has been absent from school?

Do you wish to be told the number of times that your child has been absent from each subject class?

Most parents want to be told the number of days that their child has been absent from school (Table XVII) and the number of times that their child has been absent from each subject class. (See Table XVIII)

TABLE XVII: RESPONSES OF PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS TO ITEM 9: "DO YOU WISH TO BE TOLD THE NUMBER OF DAYS THAT YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN ABSENT FROM SCHOOL?"

| Response | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Yes" | 109 (90.1%) | 54 (90.0%) | 124 (89.2%) | 287 (89.7%) |
| "No" | 11 ( 9.1%) | 3 ( 5.0%) | 12 ( 8.6%) | 26 ( 8.1%) |
| No Response | 1 ( 0.8%) | 3 ( 5.0%) | 3 ( 2.2%) | 7 ( 2.2%) |

TABLE XVIII: RESPONSES OF PARENTS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS TO ITEM 9: "DO YOU WISH TO BE TOLD THE NUMBER OF TIMES THAT YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN ABSENT FROM EACH SUBJECT CLASS?"

| Response | School 'A' | School 'B' | School 'C' | Total Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Yes" | 98 (81.0%) | 51 (85.0%) | 129 (92.8%) | 278 (86.9%) |
| "No" | 22 (18.2%) | 6 (10.0%) | 8 ( 5.8%) | 36 (11.2%) |
| No Response | 1 ( 0.8%) | 3 ( 5.0%) | 2 ( 1.4%) | 6 ( 1.9%) |

Principal Findings

1. Of all methods of reporting, parents prefer a combination of report cards and teacher-parent conferences. By themselves, cards are more popular than teacher-parent conferences.

2. The questions that parents would like most to be answered are:

   How is my child progressing in his studies?
   Is he working hard enough? and
   Is he happy in school?

   They are least interested in his behaviour and social competence.

3. Parents were generally satisfied with the present report cards; satisfaction ranged from 65% to 82%, except for the secondary school report card "B" for which the proportion was only 53%.

4. Most parents would prefer that the child's achievement be evaluated in relation to his own ability. Their second choice was a comparison with a prescribed standard of achievement.

5. Parents would not be satisfied to receive report cards only when their children are doing unsatisfactory work.

6. Of all of the systems used to report pupil progress, parents of children in elementary schools prefer (in order) symbols, letter grades and teachers' comments. Parents of secondary students prefer letter grades, percentage marks, and teachers' comments (in that order).

7. Parents of secondary students want to be informed about absences from school and from subject classes.

Parents in different school districts appear to have different desires. Accordingly, the present policy is a wise one of permitting each school to use a style of reporting and a design of report card that suit its particular needs.